

United States Department of State

Working Together For Wetlands

A Celebration of
25 Years of the
Ramsar
Convention

Washington, D.C.
April 25-26, 1996



WELCOMING ADDRESS

Timothy E. Wirth
Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs

Thank you all very much for coming, and welcome to the State Department. We are very pleased that you are here with us today, and look forward to a productive conference that will, as promised, get us “Working Together for Wetlands.” I want to begin by recognizing the Deputy Secretary of the Department, Strobe Talbott, who has joined us this morning — Mr. Secretary, we are pleased that you are here.

All of us at the Department of State are deeply honored to be hosting today’s conference. Increasingly, international environmental action is a force driving our diplomatic missions around the world. Two weeks ago, Secretary Christopher delivered a major address in which he articulated in a superb way the case for placing global environmental concerns in the mainstream of American foreign policy and international affairs.

The Secretary’s speech clearly defined the intersection between American interests and environmental health. More broadly, the Secretary’s speech reflected the heightened recognition of the world’s growing interdependence and the corresponding need for nations around the world to forge common cause on behalf of our children, grandchildren, and the environment upon which they will depend.

Over the past 30 years, a remarkable set of environmental challenges have been tackled, and an impressive framework for the future is in place. At home, in response to Rachel Carson’s warning in *Silent Spring* and the sight of rivers on fire, a comprehensive and essential foundation for national environmental law has been established and a host of environmental challenges are being met. Similarly, all around the world environmental alarms have been ringing and a global resolve has been forged.

Recognizing the critical importance of wetlands and the services they provide, the Ramsar Convention emerged 25 years ago as one of the first modern environmental agreements. The Ramsar Convention typifies the promise of the kind of global cooperation Secretary Christopher talked about in his recent speech, our capability to make progress through partnership.

Ramsar presaged a period of remarkable international progress by establishing a promising framework for global ecological cooperation. Since 1971, Ramsar has been responsible for the designation of more than 750 significant wetlands in 92 nations. These sites — totaling more than 500,000 square kilometers — are critical not only to the nations in which they are located, but to the world at large. And while they are not yet completely free from the threat of ecological degradation, many of these sites would not exist without this agreement.

The Ramsar Convention accomplishes its goals through the novel power of recognition and cooperation. This is not an agreement that establishes international regulatory regimes or national mandates on signatory countries. Instead, Ramsar is a framework for action and a necessary encouragement for member states to create their own management plans for the most important wetlands. Ramsar provides a rationale for taking action, and offers the necessary technical assistance to help get the job done. As a consequence, this Convention has endured 25 years, and only three weeks ago was updated in preparation for the 21st century.

I cite these successes, and emphasize this momentum, not to be a Pollyanna, or to suggest that the hard work is done and we can now relax. I cite them because these successes are important, very important:

they prove that partnerships between the public and private sectors, between science and government, can work;

they prove that public dollars, wisely invested, can bring a significant return;

and they form the foundation for the great confidence and momentum that must be summoned to face today’s challenges.

And these challenges are great — and grave. Looking back at the last 25 years, we have now come to realize that the easy fruit has been plucked. While having accomplished a great deal, it turns out that we have conquered the easy targets. The

unhappy fact, now increasingly well known, is that all our environmental successes have not reversed the most basic, potentially life-threatening trends:

around the world, 50 percent of the world's wetlands have already been lost;

the planet's forest cover, essential to so many natural systems, is shrinking with alarming speed;

nearly 25 percent of the world's topsoil has been lost, this at a time of sharply increasing global demand for food;

underground water tables are falling all over the world — even in our own backyard on the Great Plains — making water wars a possibility in many parts of the world;

human activity has spawned the fifth period of mass extinction in the planet's history;

and compounding the increased consumption of resources is the fact that last year the world's population grew more than ever before in a single year — by 100 million people, the equivalent of a New York City each month, a Mexico each year, a China each decade.

But if the challenges are daunting, so too is the importance of what we are discussing here at this conference. Far from being wastelands, as they had been characterized (or mischaracterized) for decades, wetlands comprise one of our richest and most vital ecosystems. Rich not only in life forms and products of value to our local economies, wetlands also carry out important ecological functions that benefit our biosphere. Wetlands are important for the critical services they provide — the food and clean water they yield; the recreation and tourism they help to foster; the wildlife habitat they harbor; the essential ecological services they provide for the planet.

These critical interrelationships were brought home to me during meetings last month in Brazil. Traveling in the Pantanal, one of the Earth's largest and richest wetlands, I saw vast numbers of waterbirds. I was fascinated to learn that many of these birds breed in Canada during the northern summer. The same birds migrate through the continental United States in the fall months, where they rely on our wetlands as a way station on the trip south. Finally, thousands of miles and months removed from Canada, they arrive in South America for the austral summer.

The destruction of any single breeding, staging, or wintering site along what is analogous to an "archipelago" of natural refuges would be a serious threat to the survival of a variety of migratory species. In this way, the survival of these migratory birds, traveling virtually from one end of the globe to the other, speaks both to the importance of wetlands preservation and to the imperative of international cooperation.

The purpose of this conference is to explore the range of initiatives and principles that underlie wetlands protection at home and abroad and to forge new strategies for the future. We are hoping that you as a group will be able to share your expertise in a way that ensures that everyone leaves this meeting a little better prepared to address the challenges of their own programs and their local ecosystems.

We also hope that some of the sparks that are produced by bringing together a motivated and focused group such as this will help shine a light on new strategies for the future.

As part of this process, I want to let you know about a modest initiative that the Department has launched to help leverage international partnerships on behalf of wetlands preservation and management. *Wetlands for the Future*, as we call it, is a \$500,000 small grants program that supports the training of wetlands managers in Latin America and the Caribbean. This spring, the Department of State, in conjunction with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Ramsar officials, and NGO partners, made its first grants under this innovative new program. We look forward to working with all of you and your counterparts throughout the Hemisphere in making this program a success.

Before I introduce our guest keynote speaker, I want to thank our partners in this enterprise: the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Agency for International Development, Ducks Unlimited, the Terrene Institute, Sierra Club, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the National Wetlands Conservation Alliance, the World Wildlife Fund, the Florida Center for Environmental Studies, and IUCN-US. This group has worked hard and long to make this event a success and we extend our appreciation for their cooperation.

At this time it is my great pleasure to introduce a friend of wetlands and a friend of mine. Don Henley is both an artist and a performer. His artistic talents and accomplishments in the field of music are very well known. And

increasingly, we are coming to understand that he is one of the most impressive performers in the environmental field. Most recently, Don has been deeply engaged as founder of the Caddo Lake Institute, which seeks to preserve, through Ramsar designation, Caddo Lake, a premier cypress swamp ecosystem unique to the Deep South and the largest naturally formed lake in Texas. He also founded and has been a tireless advocate for the Walden Woods Project, which has preserved and restored the natural environment of the historic pond and woods in Massachusetts made famous by the writings of the philosopher and naturalist Henry David Thoreau.

These are only two of the many environmental causes he has embraced and supported with vigor. He has compiled a remarkable record of accomplishment in all his work and we are delighted to have him with us. I could sing his praises for some time — but his voice is better than mine. Please join me in welcoming Mr. Don Henley.

SO MANY WETLANDS, SO LITTLE TIME



Don Henley
Founder, Caddo Lake Institute



I would like to talk to you this morning about what large agencies and small communities can do to stimulate the rapid proliferation of community wetland science programs — that is, to use local wetlands to educate communities in wetland science and stewardship. These suggestions are logical extensions of what Under Secretary Wirth has advocated since he joined the U.S. Department of State. He has said that the most “bang for the buck” in solving environmental problems in the former Eastern Block countries would be through underwriting local NGOs (nongovernmental organizations).

Investing in U.S. Wetland Communities

We believe that the Caddo Lake Institute’s experience proves that similar investments would be an excellent strategy to help small U.S. communities conserve their wetlands. One of the best uses of scarce environmental dollars in the United States is to invest them in local people who enrich community wetland science education, stewardship, monitoring, and mentorship. These investments should be both direct and indirect.

Direct investment should pay the marginal costs of wetland science training for educators in colleges, schools, and local NGOs. These direct investments would enable them to do the following things:

Create curricula to teach the science of local wetlands.

Conduct scientifically valid baseline monitoring of the health, natural functions, and values of these local ecosystems.

Equip community science educators to act as mentors by providing guidance to their local land-owning neighbors.

Indirect investments should:

Make technical equipment and facilities of the various agencies accessible to local science wetland educators.

Provide the technical support of wetland scientists and other experts (some of the world’s most noted experts are those very same government scientists, field biologists, and bureaucrats who have recently become the whipping boys of today’s fringe politicians and their constituency).

Marginal cost partnerships between local educators and local and regional conservation agencies represent win-win opportunities for all. Small community schools and colleges are already funded and charged with the task of teaching

scientific methods and the best use of natural systems. Yet many people believe that this is not being done effectively by classroom-bound science or philosophically-based environmental “awareness” courses. Very few courses use local ecosystems for field-based natural science training. Yet in most cases, educational courses alone do not provide skills that can inform community decision-making which might alter local wetland functions and values. Local communities win by receiving such inducements to refocus their already paid-for community resources in order to implement useful wetland science education.

Large agencies also win. They, too, receive funds and are mandated to accomplish conservation stewardship. Few of these agencies can afford to have employees reside in, or even visit, every wetland community. Like local communities, government agencies need only re-target existing funding — such as funding for conservation reserves, ecosystem monitoring, and wetland, wildlife, and bird habitat programs in order to accomplish numerous agency objectives through such local wetland education enrichments. Useful monitoring data can be collected at marginal cost for early warning and agency follow-up purposes. Agency people can take more constructive roles as technical advisors and mentors, rather than as revenueurs, watchdogs, or law enforcers.

The Caddo Lake Institute's Experience

The Caddo Lake Institute, through its *Caddo Lake Scholars Program*, has developed such a “win-win” partnership with the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, its National Biological Service, the U.S. State Department, and the Parks and Wildlife Department of the State of Texas. We have made a video on the Ramsar Convention as a window to the world for small communities. The video suggests how the Ramsar Convention provides a common theme that can connect Ramsar educators of many cultures when they accept stewardship and mentorship roles in their Ramsar wetland communities. The Institute places considerable emphasis on the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. It is an excellent vehicle to introduce global sustainability issues to small-community educators and student interns.

At Caddo Lake our course work includes overviews of the Bruntland Report (*Our Common Future*), IUCN's *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, and the Rio Summit and its byproducts. The courses explore the importance of NGO action, the Biodiversity and Global Warming Conventions, and Agenda 21. Our courses compare the regulatory CITES Convention on endangered species with the non-regulatory Ramsar Convention on International Wetlands. This is important information for educators in communities where some uninformed, but locally influential, people regard these topics — or even the concept of “internationalism” generally — as vast conspiracies or as objects of deep suspicion.

International twinnings and exchanges serve to personalize some hard realities. These include the immense and pervasive cultural and economic obstacles to achieving sustainability, and sometimes even communication. These realities include the insight that thousands of individuals attend hundreds of conferences and technical sessions each year. Their sacrifices only move the global process by inches a year when miles per hour is what the situation actually requires.

Our wetland “twinnings” are currently underway or, in many cases, are just beginning. Some have begun internationally with Kenya, Ethiopia, Hungary, Turkey, Honduras, Australia, Western Samoa, Japan, the United Kingdom, and several Pacific Rim locales. Nationally, the first U.S. twinning occurred between members of one of our *Caddo Lake Scholars* clubs and their counterpart in a Cache River Ramsar wetland community in Illinois. These twinnings will help wetland communities in many ways. For example, they will:

Establish biological baseline data for their local wetlands. They will do this through monitoring. These are important Ramsar objectives.

They will inform community decision-making by teaching the actual functions and values of local wetlands, which become science laboratories.

They will teach Ramsar technical and scientific criteria for wetlands.

And they will encourage local people to apply these Ramsar criteria to describe and nominate additional wetlands for possible Ramsar designation, public or private.

Agency Action

What can most large agencies do to stimulate effective community action? Agencies must demonstrate a commitment not to dampen local enthusiasm by bureaucratic delay. We believe that the Departments of State and Interior will again show their ability to provide prompt support for our local NGO when they respond to the Caddo Lake Institute's newest initiatives.

We hope that their first response will be to join in our nomination of two privately owned tracts of land totaling 3,500 acres, for addition to our existing Ramsar site. Secondly, we need their help in obtaining Department of Defense concurrence in the Ramsar designation of several thousand acres of forested old growth wetlands and critical upland catchment area, which lie within the U.S.-owned Longhorn Army Ammunition Plant. This inactive plant is located on the shores of Caddo Lake. Thirdly, we need their assistance in expediting approval of the Institute's proposed long-term leases and options to lease natural areas within the Longhorn facility.

Fourthly, we would welcome any agency assistance that will permit us to promptly occupy these leased lands in order to establish the first U.S. Regional Ramsar Center and an Academy of Wetland Science Education. These new facilities will be charged with the task of using Ramsar principles to expand wetland science education, stewardship, and mentorship. We would also ask that the Departments of State and Interior request the Ramsar Bureau in Geneva, Switzerland, to expedite endorsement of these designations and initiatives. And finally, we would seek official authorization of the Institute to help obtain prompt completion of these projects.

Caddo Lake Institute has an excellent track record as a team. In 1993, our public-private partnership expedited the designation of Caddo Lake as the 13th U.S. Ramsar site. In March of 1996, the Institute's plan to expend \$100,000 to develop the Ramsar Center and Academy was included as part of the pledge which the United States Government made in Brisbane, Australia, to advance the goals of the Ramsar Convention. I am so confident in the ability

of our partnership to promptly accomplish these two new objectives that I would like to invite everyone in this room to come to Caddo Lake in October of 1996 for the official designation of additional private and public Ramsar lands, and kick-off ceremonies for our Ramsar Center and Academy projects.

Community Action

I would like to offer a few suggestions, if I might, to local community educators who want to join in this small community/large agency initiative:

Your involvement will accelerate this global process. You can best do this by acting locally in ways that I have discussed.

You can aid the initiative by helping your community organizations teach and use applied wetland science stewardship and mentorship.

Any community entity you choose will do, as long as it suits the locality and you.

The Caddo Lake Institute is only one model. Use or adapt only those elements that suit your local situation. In Ethiopia and Kenya, wetland clubs were organized. In Hungary, school teachers are cooperating with wetland park scientists. In Kushiro, Japan, there is a well-funded International Crane and Wetland Center which supports excellent scientific research. Don't wait for the UN, or the Ramsar Bureau, or your national or state agencies, or even your local governments to tell you how to study and conserve your local ecosystems. Your local educators, your knowledgeable citizens and landowners — and you — are already there. Seek out people or businesses who would be honored or concerned enough to perform sponsoring or funding roles in your community. Even if there are none, nearly every community has educators and educational organizations whose programs will be enriched by field-based wetland science studies.

Local NGOs can perform important roles in your communities that large NGOs cannot. For example, your NGO can perform any or all of the following roles:

It can act as an "ecosystem-specific" guardian.

It can concentrate on local ecological and cultural research, education, and conservation.

It can act as an intermediary between your local educators and students and their schools and colleges.

It can learn about, and be sensitive to, the concerns of local people — whether they are educators, students, landowners, or business owners.

It can do the same for local, state, and national officials.

It can be an honest broker and interpreter between these diverse community and institutional cultures and objectives.

And it can do so in ways that optimize the gains for all participants.

Institute Action

What can Caddo Lake Institute do? Here are my suggestions on how the Caddo Lake Institute can accelerate creation of local wetland partnerships between large agencies and small communities:

It can provide technical advice.

It can advocate support for local work by agencies and large NGOs.

It can report on and ask for recognition of innovations which actually mobilize local people to participate in local wetland management.

The Ramsar program encourages you to report the value of your local efforts. Previously, the few large NGOs that organized the original Ramsar wetland initiative were the only ones routinely consulted in policy matters. However, in Brisbane that changed because of effective participation by the rest of the NGO community—including small local NGOs like the Caddo Lake Institute. To assure their place at the table, the NGOs signed a pledge which committed them:

To join the Ramsar global wetland conservation effort.

To advocate that maximum conservation assistance reaches local communities.

To contribute cash and/or services, as each deems best.

To keep track of and render an accounting of their contributions at the next Conference of the Parties in Costa Rica in 1999.

The NGOs who signed the Brisbane pledge also supported a recommendation from the Contracting Parties asking the Ramsar Bureau to confer with knowledgeable NGOs (such as Caddo Lake Institute, IUCN, WWF, and the Kushiro Center) in order to enable the Bureau to report on selected model community participation case studies and to recommend community empowerment guidelines. This report is due at the 1999 Conference of the Parties which will be held in Costa Rica.

That is why I hope to see you in Costa Rica at the Ramsar Conference in 1999. I look forward to hearing the reports about how your community joined the vanguard of small communities and large agencies which accelerated the rate of global wetland conservation. Remember, there are only so many remaining wetlands and there is so little time.

WETLANDS, WATER, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Delmar Blasco
Secretary General
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

I am very honored to have the opportunity to address you this morning and to share with you some thoughts on how the Convention on Wetlands can contribute to the quest for sustainable development on our planet.

But before doing that, let me express my sincere gratitude to the U.S. Department of State, the Office of International Affairs at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Wetlands Conservation Alliance, the World Wildlife Fund, the Sierra Club, the U.S. Agency for International Development, Ducks Unlimited, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Terrene Institute, the Florida Center for Environmental Studies, and IUCN-US, for having taken the initiative to organize this meeting to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention.

To have this meeting here today in this capitol city, sponsored by such significant government departments and nongovernmental institutions, represents in itself an important recognition of the role that the Convention has played so far, and, even more importantly, of the role it can play in the future.

As you may know, we celebrated the 6th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention less than one month ago in Brisbane, Australia. In my view this Conference was very significant for a number of issues:

First, the attendance. Out of 93 Contracting Parties, 91 were present, many of them represented by powerful delegations — in several cases headed by ministers or deputy ministers — involving government agencies beyond the strict nature conservation realm, an indication that governments are beginning to perceive the broader mandate of our Convention. As examples, I can mention the cases of China, France, Ghana, South Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil, and Costa Rica. The American delegation was also significant for the number of government agencies that were involved, again, beyond the strict concerns of nature conservation. I would like to pay tribute here to your delegation, for the very constructive role it played throughout the Conference.

In addition to the 91 Contracting Parties, we had observers from 30 countries that are not yet signatories to the Convention. They were there because they wanted to know more about the Convention, and a good number of them indicated that they are about to accede or were seriously considering it. One example is the Bahamas, which has already informed us that it has now submitted the necessary accession documentation to UNESCO, the depository of the Convention. As important as the presence of 121 countries was, the presence of almost 90 international and national non-governmental organizations, such as the WWF family, IUCN, Wetlands International, and the Caddo Lake Institute was, in my view, just as important as the presence of the 121 governments represented. Any convention or international instrument is only as important as the recognition and support it receives from civil society. In our world, the commitment of governments is no longer sufficient if this commitment does not reflect the concerns and support of civil society.

Second, the Brisbane Conference was significant because of the decisions it took. The most important was the adoption of a Strategic Plan for the next six years: 1997 - 2002. The adoption of the Plan is relevant because:

(a) The Plan includes a clear Mission Statement — “The Convention’s mission is the conservation and wise use of wetlands by national action and international cooperation as a means to achieve sustainable development throughout the world.” Let me clarify immediately that the concept of “wise use” embodied in the text of the Convention is understood as “sustainable use,” defined by the Conference of the Parties as “sustainable utilization for the benefit of humankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem.” The acknowledgment that Ramsar’s mission is to contribute to achieving sustainable development places the treaty squarely within the context of Agenda 21 and the post-Rio frame of mind, with conservation and development being perceived as two sides of the same coin. If one side is altered, the coin loses its value.

(b) With the Strategic Plan, for the first time the Conference of the Parties has adopted a clear path for the implementation of the Convention. As with most international treaties, the text of the Convention is very general in relation to its objectives and the ways and means to achieve them. The Strategic Plan has now translated those general objectives into eight practical objectives, in turn expressed in 29 operational objectives and 124 concrete actions assigned to the Contracting Parties, the different bodies of the Convention — the Standing Committee, the Conference of the Parties, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and the Convention Secretariat (known as the Ramsar Bureau) — and the NGO community engaged with the Convention.

(c) The Strategic Plan balanced out, by giving them equal importance, the basic functions and concerns of the Convention to: (i) achieve the wise use of all wetlands in each country; (ii) raise awareness of wetland values and functions at all levels; (iii) reinforce the capacity of institutions in each country to implement the Convention; (iv) make effective use of the mechanism provided by the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance; and (v) mobilize international cooperation related to wetlands.

In addition to the Strategic Plan, the Conference adopted a series of resolutions and recommendations for improving the application of existing mechanisms under the Convention such as:

the adoption of working definitions and guidelines for interpreting change in the ecological character of Ramsar sites;

the adoption of a fourth criterion for identifying wetlands of international importance based on fish, and guidelines for its application;

the inclusion of subterranean karst wetlands as a wetland type under the Ramsar classification system; and the recognition of the importance of the wise use and conservation of peatland and coral reefs, as well as associated ecosystems, such as mangroves and seagrass beds.

In relation to these marine issues, I am eager to devote priority attention to “bringing the Convention to the sea shores,” since until now we have been anchored too much on the inland wetlands. In the near future we will be approaching the countries leading in the *International Coral Reef Initiative*, including this country, to see how we can work together for the conservation and wise use of the wetlands in the coastal zone, so significant for biodiversity and for many societies, and yet so neglected and abused.

The Brisbane Conference also broke new ground by adopting a resolution on Ramsar and water and a recommendation on toxic chemicals in wetlands. In my view, the resolution on Ramsar and water is of high significance, because for the first time the Conference of the Parties is addressing the question of the important hydrological functions of wetlands, including groundwater recharge, water quality improvement, flood alleviation, as well as the inextricable link between wetlands and water resources. While these concepts are explicitly or implicitly embodied in the text of the Convention, the treaty has developed mainly around the species that live in wetlands or use wetlands in their life cycles — very little has been done so far to address the issues related to the element that constitutes the prerequisite for the very existence of wetlands: *water*. The world is becoming increasingly aware of the imminent global scarcity of fresh water. In a single generation, the world’s net renewable fresh water resources per capita have almost halved, and, if we continue on the same path, in another 30 years many countries will reach such low levels of availability that water could easily become not only a source of social tensions and instability, but also a matter of national security and international confrontation. Thus, wetlands, and the Convention that deals specifically with them, should be seen in a new light. I am personally prepared to devote priority attention to the implementation of the resolution on Ramsar and water, and to the new issues and approaches that could be derived from it.

The recommendation on toxic chemicals also constitutes, in my view, a ground-breaking decision, since it recognizes that wetlands are also affected by the overall development pattern being followed on the planet. This recommendation requests Contracting Parties to provide information in their reports to the next Conference in 1999 on their efforts to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands.

Finally, also for the first time, this Conference of the Parties had as part of its program a Technical Session devoted to community participation. As a result, the Conference adopted a recommendation calling upon Contracting Parties to make specific efforts to encourage active and informed participation of local and indigenous

people in wetland management. The recommendation also instructs the Convention Secretariat, in cooperation with NGOs, including WWF and the Caddo Lake Institute, to evaluate the benefits derived from community involvement and to prepare guidelines to facilitate that involvement, for consideration at the next Conference of the Parties.

This country has made pioneering efforts in this area, including the recent publication of the guidebook for communities on protecting floodplain resources prepared under the auspices of the Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force, with funding from U.S. AID and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the administrative support of the Wetlands Division of the Environmental Protection Agency. There are many other good examples of community involvement in wetland management in the United States, and I look forward to working with the government agencies and the NGO community to derive lessons from your experience that could be useful to other countries and societies around the world.

Third, the Brisbane Conference witnessed a renewed commitment from governments and NGOs. Apart from approving a Strategic Plan that puts the onus for the implementation of the Convention mainly on the Contracting Parties themselves, a number of governments responded positively to the Australian initiative to pledge a one-time special contribution on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary. The United States pledged an additional \$1 million contribution over the next six years, over and above its core budget voluntary contribution, and the U.S.-funded 25th Anniversary project (entitled *Wetlands for the Future*) for activities in the Neotropics to the tune of \$250,000 per year. Pledges were also made by Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, France, Ghana, Hungary, Iceland, India, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Caddo Lake Institute also pledged \$100,000 to its Ramsar-based initiatives, and announced the establishment of the first U.S. regional academy of wetland science education and the first U.S. regional Ramsar center, to be located adjacent to the Caddo Lake Ramsar site. For its part, Ducks Unlimited, on behalf of its organizations in Australia, Canada, Europe, Mexico, New Zealand, and the U.S., pledged to commit at least \$3 million in fiscal years 1996-97 for activities at 21 Ramsar sites worldwide and in support of National Ramsar Committees.

NGOs present in Brisbane signed the "Non-Governmental Organizations Brisbane Pledge of Support for the Ramsar Convention," committing themselves to work in partnership with the Ramsar Secretariat and Contracting Parties in community-based education, information and empowerment programs, as well as to implement field-level wetland conservation, restoration, and wise-use projects. Wetlands International also signed a pledge of support to the Convention at a public ceremony in Brisbane, and the WWF family is already in active discussions with the Ramsar Bureau on its role in implementing the Brisbane resolutions and Strategic Plan, to which they plan to assign substantial resources.

At the Brisbane Conference, the Parties endorsed the Ramsar Bureau's efforts to work closely with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and invited the next meeting of the Biodiversity Convention (to be held in Buenos Aires this November) to include in its agenda a report prepared by Ramsar on progress achieved and problems encountered in conserving wetland biodiversity.

The Brisbane Conference received, for the first time in the Convention's history, invitations from two developing countries to host the next Conference of the Parties in 1999: India and Costa Rica. The two countries came to an agreement by which the next Conference will be held in Costa Rica, while India maintains its offer to host the Conference in 2002.

This country is leading the world. You are in a clear position of power, but also of extreme responsibility, because to a large degree the future of our planet depends on the wisdom of this great nation. I have read with particular interest the speech of Secretary of State Warren Christopher on "American Diplomacy and the Global Environmental Challenges of the 21st Century," delivered on April 9th at Stanford University, disclosing four elements of a strategy at the global, regional, and bilateral levels and a partnership with the business and NGO sectors. I was reassured by the clear determination of this Administration to put environmental issues, in the words of the Secretary of State, "where they belong: in the mainstream of American foreign policy." I was also pleased to read the announcement that the State Department will host, by the end of 1997, a conference on strategies to improve U.S. compliance with international environmental agreements, "to ensure that those agreements yield lasting results, not just promises."

We hope to continue counting on the U.S. government and the U.S. NGO community for clear support for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention worldwide. We very much value that support, and regret that for the current year the U.S. voluntary contribution has been reduced from \$750,000 to \$300,000. We very much hope

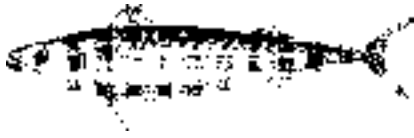
that this will be only a temporary reduction and that the Administration will be able to find additional resources to reinstate its support to the level of previous years.

We also hope that U.S. support at the international level will be backed by a “preaching by example” approach that would entail a renewed effort on the implementation of Ramsar at the national level in the two major domains covered by the Convention. First, we hope to see the inclusion of other U.S. sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, and a decisive effort to maintain the ecological character of U.S. sites already included in the List.

In this regard, I would like to applaud the announcement of Vice President Gore for the Administration’s intention to devote \$1.5 billion to the restoration of the Everglades, one of the flagships of the Ramsar List! Second, further development of policies and practices that will ensure the conservation and sustainable use of all wetlands in the U.S. territory would be an excellent model for other countries to emulate. The world is watching with interest the results of the U.S. experience with wetland mitigation banking, as well as the initiatives to devolve to local communities a sense of ownership over the wetlands in their surroundings.

We are also looking forward to the effective functioning of a strong U.S. Ramsar Committee involving as many as possible of the 18 or so federal agencies that I understand, in different departments and independent agencies, currently exercise responsibility for water programs and projects. Those are in addition to the agencies that have responsibility over species conservation and protected areas, and other land management agencies, and as many NGOs as possible. We hope to see not only the NGOs specialized in wetlands issues, but also the NGO networks involved with biodiversity and sustainable development issues.

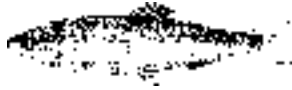
Thank you again for this opportunity to address this important audience. The Ramsar Bureau is small in the number of people working there and in terms of the financial resources at our disposal. But we have something very important to contribute to the partnership with you: our unbreakable commitment to wetland conservation and wise use, and our determination to make the Ramsar Convention an effective instrument for achieving sustainable development on our planet.



PROTECTING OUR FUTURE



the late Mollie H. Beattie
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Good morning. I am Mollie Beattie, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Many of you are probably familiar with the Fish and Wildlife Service. With so many of our nation's landmark conservation laws under attack, we've been in the news quite a bit lately. But for those who are not familiar with the Service, let me give you a quick description of what we do.

The mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

To accomplish this mission, the Service operates hundreds of field stations across the country. We manage more than 500 national wildlife refuges, a system that stretches from Hawaii to Maine. It is larger than, if not as well known as, the National Park System. We also operate more than 70 national fish hatcheries producing 180 million fish a year for our nation's lakes, rivers, and streams.

The conservation of wetlands is one of our major focuses, whether on wildlife refuges or through voluntary partnerships on private lands. We administer two major wetland conservation grant programs and another program, *Partners for Wildlife*, that assists farmers and other landowners in restoring wetlands on their property. In addition, we provide technical expertise to the Army Corps of Engineers on wetland permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

Our other major responsibilities include administering the Endangered Species Act, managing hundreds of migratory bird species, and setting waterfowl hunting seasons. We also issue import and export permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and we enforce Federal wildlife laws against poaching and wildlife smuggling. So you can see we have many oars in the water. Our mission is diverse and our success is highly dependent upon people like yourselves.

Conservation victories are won acre by acre in communities across the country. They are won through the sweat and sacrifice of concerned citizens who know that a steamy swamp or a clear mountain stream is a natural treasure, as much a part of our children's inheritance as the monuments that grace this city. And perhaps more so because they affect the very quality of life we will hand down to the next generation — whether our inheritors will have clean air to breathe, whether they will have fish to catch and songbirds to hear, whether they will have clean water to drink.

Ever since *Silent Spring* and the establishment of Earth Day, citizens have been involved in grassroots lobbying to establish a solid foundation of laws to protect the environment. Likewise, it is no accident that the most successful conservation programs in the world are partnerships between the government and the people. If you look at the successful wetlands conservation programs managed by the Service, you will see that they are partnerships. *The North American Waterfowl Management Plan* is an international partnership that includes Canada, Mexico, states, provinces, local governments, community groups, conservation organizations, corporations, sportsmen's groups, and a host of private landowners. Working on the plan together, we have restored or conserved two and a half million acres of wetlands over the past decade.

Partners for Wildlife, which I mentioned a moment ago, is a partnership between the Service and thousands of landowners. The Service offers financial and technical support to restore wetlands and other vital habitat on their land under voluntary agreements. This has been especially valuable in helping conservation-minded farmers restore wetlands and associated habitat that have been converted to agriculture.

Since 1987, the program has restored 310,000 acres of wetlands in addition to 135,000 acres of prairie grassland, 600 miles of riparian habitat, and 50 miles of in-stream habitat.

Yet another partnership program is *the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants Program*. Here again, the Service helps states, conservation groups, and landowners to conserve and protect wetlands in our nation's

troubled estuarine ecosystems. The Service provides grants that must be matched at least one-for-one by its sponsoring partners.

Perhaps most important is the sweat equity that our partners pour into these projects. They're the ones who go knocking on doors seeking contributions and easements. They're the ones who educate and mobilize the community.

I think, for example, of the Merrymeeting Bay/Lower Kennebec River area of Maine. The area has a large concentration of saltwater marsh, a rare habitat in Maine that is an important feeding and nesting area for thousands of migratory birds including shorebirds, wading birds, osprey, and eagles.

There has been a great deal of development pressure on the region in recent years and local citizens realized they might lose this habitat if something was not done. So the state of Maine, the Nature Conservancy, the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and two local land trusts joined forces with the Service.

For the Service's part, we provided biological expertise, including maps that showed the location of the best habitat. We also provided expertise on how to go about applying for grants under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and the Coastal Ecosystem Program.

Our local partners took our maps, found out who owned the land, and knocked on doors to find out who might be willing to make donations, grant easements, or otherwise participate. They also worked to find the matching funds that are required to get a grant.

As a result, the Service was able to make a \$750,000 grant, matched one-for-one by local partners, under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to protect 1,500 acres of wetland habitat.

Another good example is in California's Sacramento Valley, where one determined person has made an enormous difference. Agriculture and other development have destroyed the vast majority of the original wetlands in the valley. Many farmers have adopted what are known as "clean farming" practices in which all vegetation other than crops is removed either mechanically or by herbicides. If you go to the valley after harvest, you will often find mile after mile of bare dirt fields.

A local veterinarian and farmer named John Anderson decided to change that, at least on his farm. He began to practice environmentally friendly farming. For instance, he integrated wildlife habitat borders or hedgerows into intensive row-crop farming.

Then, through the Service's *Partners for Wildlife* program, he restored lost wetlands, riparian zones, and California prairie savannas to his farm. He planted 70 species of native grasses, forbs, sedges, rushes, valley oak, cottonwood, and other native vegetation.

The farm now is host to abundant wildlife, including more than 100 species of birds. More importantly, it demonstrates that farming and good environmental stewardship can go hand in hand. Anderson already has conducted six habitat restoration workshops on his land and often gives tours to neighbors.

That's how conservation works best. There are limits to the amount of habitat the government can or should acquire. And there are limits to government regulation, both in its effectiveness as a conservation tool and in how much people are willing to support.

At some point, the will to conserve our natural resources has to rise up from the heart and soul of the people — citizens themselves taking conservation into their own hands and, along with the support of their government, making it happen.

You and millions of other citizens across this country are doing just that. And I applaud you. But I also want to say to you today that your efforts are being betrayed.

Some of you may be aware that the House of Representatives passed a bill Wednesday redefining the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Under this bill, the primary purpose of the system would no longer solely be the conservation of wildlife. Instead, recreational uses would share equal billing with conservation as the primary purposes of the system.

I was deeply saddened, and even outraged by this vote. The National Wildlife Refuge System was built acre by acre by the people of the United States for the primary purpose of conserving wildlife. Recreational uses have always been allowed on refuges; in fact, more than half of all refuges allow fishing and hunting. But the conservation of wildlife and its habitat have always come first. Where a recreational use has come into conflict with the conservation of wildlife, we have opted to protect wildlife. If the House has its way, that will no longer be true.

This is just one in a long string of legislative proposals and decisions that are threatening all the hard work that Americans have done to conserve their natural resources.

Last summer, for example, the House passed legislation that would effectively gut the Clean Water Act. The effect on the nation's streams, rivers, and lakes would be devastating, removing the protections that have restored our waterways.

The bill also would eliminate protection for many of the nation's remaining wetlands. A survey conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Service found that using the new definition of wetlands under the House bill, almost 98 percent of wetlands in South Carolina would be removed from Federal protection. In addition 90 percent would be removed in Georgia; 94 percent in Alabama; 88 percent in North Carolina; 75 percent in Nebraska; 65 percent in South Dakota; 71 percent in Wyoming — the list goes on.

Congress is also attacking the Endangered Species Act. It placed a moratorium on extending the protection of the act to any new species, leaving literally hundreds of declining species in limbo and making recovery efforts much more difficult for many of them.

Congress also slashed funding for endangered species programs, including eliminating all funding to list new species as threatened or endangered and most of the funding for pre-listing activities designed to keep declining species from ever having to be listed. Fortunately, under public pressure over the environment, Congress reluctantly restored some of this money in the budget passed this week. We are still evaluating what the effect of this new funding will be. Damage has already been done.

Finally some Republicans in Congress introduced legislation that would effectively gut the Act in the guise of reforming it. There would still be an Endangered Species Act, but for the most part in name only, since its provisions would either be too expensive or cumbersome to administer.

Taken together, these and many other proposals in Congress could have the effect of undermining all our conservation efforts.

It is always easier to destroy than to protect, to tear down than to build up. The wetland that was painstakingly restored or protected can be destroyed by pollution dumped in a river miles away. The endangered shorebird on a refuge beach can be driven away from her nest by hordes of sunbathers. The stream where salmon spawn can be ravaged by chainsaws stripping the surrounding land.

It doesn't make any difference how hard we work to conserve our natural heritage, we cannot succeed if the fundamental laws protecting our environment are abandoned. Our efforts would be like trying to plug the holes in a boat that is hopelessly sinking.

This week, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention, which recognizes that wetlands many people once considered to be useless wastelands indeed do have international significance and need to be protected. We have made great progress over those 25 years in conserving wetlands.

It would be tragic if the United States of America, which has done more to protect the environment and conserve natural resources than any country on earth, decided at this point that we were no longer going to protect wetlands; or that we were no longer going to conserve endangered species; or if we decided that we were no longer going to protect our rivers, streams, and lakes from pollution; or if we decided that conserving wildlife would no longer be the primary purpose of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Now is the time for us to celebrate Ramsar and to celebrate the work of millions of Americans who have joined in partnerships to conserve wetlands and other national treasures. But it is also the time to be vigilant. It is the time to be heard. Next year may be too late.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR AMERICAN WETLANDS

Paul Johnson
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service



I'd like to talk to you today about another quiet revolution that's taking place in meshing national policies — specifically food policies and land policies. Within the last 10 years, the Department of Agriculture has started to move these two areas closer together in recognition that food policy cannot run in one direction concentrating on production, and land policy be based in another federal department concentrating on other issues. Most of the land in this country is privately owned and most of it is in agriculture.

There has been a strong recognition within the last 10 years, with passage of the 1985 Farm Bill in particular, that food and land policies need to be coordinated. We have just celebrated what we call Earth Week in this country. On Earth Day, I opened my newspaper and was disappointed because I did not see any mention of the role that agriculture is playing — and has played — in the stewardship of the land of our country. The fact is a great amount of good has happened in the last 60 years, and most certainly in the last 10 years. We began working very quietly in every community in this country, through what we call conservation districts, to try to weave what Aldo Leopold called the “conservation carpet” across the American landscape. He recognized that it was the American farmer who had to do that.

There is a need for all of us to recognize that nature does not respect boundaries. Private lands must be an important part of a healthy environment and a healthy world. There have been a lot of success stories in the past few years. On the agricultural side, private landowners have reduced cropland soil erosion by nearly a third over the last decade. Water is running cleaner today than it did 10, 15, 20, or 25 years ago. We know we are not where we need to be, but we have come a long, long way. When you reduce soil losses in this country by a billion tons annually, you've got to have cleaner water.

Wetlands, the topic of this conference, bring to mind a success story to tell. For the first time since we put the plow on the ground in North America, we can say we are close to “no-net-loss” of wetlands on the agricultural landscape. This has come about through a series of programs, the most important being what we call *Swampbuster*. Ten years ago Congress told American farmers that since they are receiving public tax-supported benefits (commodity programs, disaster programs, loan programs, and others), they should be held to a slightly higher wetlands protection standard than the rest of our nation. Today, if farmers participate in USDA programs — and the vast majority of them do — they are held to this high standard.

You can imagine that, after 50 years of USDA helping farmers drain wetlands, it is difficult to suddenly turn this concept upside down and say every wet spot is sacred. This change in outlook has been difficult on our employees as well as the landowners with whom we work. We recognize we have to go beyond simply putting the break on drainage. We must build common ground with those who own and till the soil. We must use good science and help farmers understand and appreciate the functions and values of wetlands. The new Farm Bill is going to allow us all to work together to do that.

Swampbuster has greatly reduced wetland losses and the *Wetlands Reserve Program* allows us to purchase conservation easements on agricultural land to restore prior converted, fully drained wetlands, and partially drained wetlands. These wetlands are then maintained as close to their original natural condition as possible. Within the last four years we have signed contracts on over 300,000 acres. Our goal is to have close to a million acres in place by the year 2000. Couple the wetlands being restored under the *Wetlands Reserve Program* with those being protected under *Swampbuster*, and you can see we have made great progress.

We've also come together in this country building wetlands restoration into emergency disaster assistance pro-

grams. Whenever we help local communities recover from disasters, we can use some of the emergency money to purchase easements on floodplains and convert those back to bottomland forests and wetlands. We did this under specific authorization for recovery efforts with the 1993 floods in the Midwest. Now, we don't have to go back after every disaster to help repair things where we have easements and naturally adapted vegetation along rivers and streams. This is one more example of bringing different policies together and recognizing the need for some common sense.

Another major program put together in 1985 was the *Conservation Reserve Program* (CRP). The new Farm Bill reauthorized CRP at the 36 million acre level. The original goals of the program were to reduce erosion of our valuable topsoil and reduce production of surplus commodity crops. Today, we are probably more interested in getting farmers to produce rather than not to produce with commodity prices at world record levels. We can look forward to the possibility of using new enrollment criteria for targeting environmental benefits. That is 36 million acres of cropland in this country that will be kept in, or converted, to permanent vegetative cover to benefit the environment. This will include restoring wetlands and surrounding uplands which in many areas are an integral part of a healthy functioning wetland ecosystem.

A couple of years ago the Administration pulled together the four principal federal agencies in this country that deal with wetlands. Agency leaders were told to resolve a long list of wetland issues and eliminate landowner confusion regarding wetlands — a tall task. Private landowners often didn't know where to go for permission to do anything in a wetland. It was difficult to figure out how to get approval to restore or enhance a wetland. Here were four federal agencies involved, each going its own way with little coordination. Today, all four agencies try to speak with one voice. Agency rules and regulations are clearer, more flexible, and better coordinated. Our agency takes the lead for working with farmers and ranchers. We want to be sure that private landowners are not confused about whom to see for what permit. That has been a major improvement. This also sets a standard for the future of working more cooperatively with private landowners.

The 1996 Farm Bill is the most important piece of environmental legislation we've had in quite a while. It certainly is the most important one this year. If it is put together right, the environmental benefits — even in this decade — will be dramatic. Remember, we are talking about 70 percent of the land in this country being impacted by bringing a land policy and a food policy together through the USDA.

I wish we could change the name of USDA to the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship because that is really what it is all about. If you add the Forest Service, USDA has a major responsibility for conservation on about 80 percent of the land in this country. Too often when people think about environmental protection, they don't think about the Department of Agriculture.

With commodity prices and world grain prices at record highs, terrific pressure will be put on land around the world. We're seeing prices on corn today that are a third again as high as the record highs in the '70s. I remember the '70s when we last had these conditions — gullies started to reappear and wetlands were drained again. Some of our most valuable bottomland hardwood wetlands along the Mississippi were bulldozed clear and the timber burned to make way for soybeans. This time we must fight the urge for history to repeat itself.

Work together with us and your organization to help farmers understand the importance of wetlands and how they fit in the landscape. All successful conservation programs do two things: (1) they provide incentives and technical assistance to get conservation on the ground, and (2) they help private landowners feel good about what they're doing. For soil conservation, we have programs that meet both these conditions. For wetlands, however, we meet only one of them — technical assistance. We may be protecting wetlands across the nation but we do not yet have the heart and soul of the farmer.

We recognize this as a major challenge. If you haven't worked with the USDA, knock on our door, beat our door down until we come together with you. We are represented in every county in the country. Wherever you are there is a conservation district. Go in and see them, get to know them, and let's make this thing work.

I'd like to close with what I think our efforts are really all about. In government we talk about programs and delivering these programs; we talk about new laws and putting together new regulations. We need some boundaries around us — some way in which our behavior can be modified to benefit the environment.

I'd like to read from two writings by Aldo Leopold — one of our best conservation philosophers. The first deals with putting us and what we are doing in a time perspective.

In Leopold's 1937 *Marsh Elegy*, he wrote about the cranes. "Our appreciation of the crane grows with the slow unraveling of earth history. His tribe, we now know, stems out of the remote Eocene. The other members of the fauna in which he originated are long since entombed within the hills. When we hear his call we hear no mere bird. We hear the trumpet in the orchestra of evolution. He is the symbol of our untamable past, of that incredible sweep of millennia which underlies and conditions the daily affairs of birds and men."

It's hard to see our place in this long history — to see what brought us to where we are today. In *A Sand County Almanac* Leopold traces the changes in the Wisconsin countryside month-by-month for a whole year. In discussing March, he says:

"In the beginning there was only the unity of the Ice Sheet. Then followed the unity of the March thaw, and the northward hegira of the international geese. Every March since the Pleistocene the geese have honked unity from China Sea to Siberian Steppe, from Euphrates to Volga, from Nile to Murmansk, from Lincolnshire to Spitsbergen. Every March since the Pleistocene the geese have honked unity from Currituck to Labrador, Matamuskeet to Ungava, Horseshoe Lake to Hudson's Bay, Avery Island to Baffin Land Panhandle to Mackenzie, Sacramento to Yukon."

"By this international commerce of geese the waste corn of Illinois is carried through the clouds to the Arctic tundra, there to combine with the waste sunlight of a nightless June to grow goslings for all the lands between. And in this annual barter of food for light, and winter warmth for summer solitude, the whole continent receives as net profit a wild poem dropped from the murky skies upon the muds of March."

Think about the interconnectedness of all of us. Especially when we talk about wetlands, it's important not just to think about a single wet spot in one place, but the interconnectedness of all wetlands and their part in the interconnectedness of life.

Leopold also talked about the importance of learning to read the land. When we do this, and understand it, he said he has no fear of what we will do to it — especially when one knows the many things the land does for you. If we can get people and their hearts and their souls lined up right to learn to live in the world and not to feel that they must control it, then I think we'll be there. I extend a hand to all of you to work with our agencies and the conservation partners we have across the country. Let's carry on and do good work.



WORKING TOGETHER FOR WETLANDS

Results of the Breakout Sessions



On the second afternoon of the conference, participants met in two series of concurrent sessions to explore specific wetlands issues, programs, and problems. The results of the sessions were summarized at the closing session of the meeting. The following is a summary of the discussions and conclusions from each session.

Strategies for Educating People about Wetlands

(Judith Taggart, facilitator)

Session attendees shared ideas and experiences during this group's discussion of effective strategies for educating about wetlands. Several students from Marshall High School in Texas, participants in the Caddo Lake Institute's *Caddo Lake Scholars Program*, described how the Institute is reaching out mainly to junior and senior high school students to provide detailed wetland training and study programs. Through their knowledge, enthusiasm, and planned activities the students are leading others in their schools and communities to better understand and appreciate the values of wetlands. Bruce Monroe discussed his *Whales and Wetlands* activities with the Sierra Club and American Cetacean Society in southern California.

Elana Cohen, Water Resources Project Manager for the League of Women Voters, discussed their new wetlands citizen education program to increase citizen awareness about the need to protect our nation's wetlands. In early May, League leaders from around the country participated in a three day train-the-trainers workshop. And the June-July issue of the League's magazine featured an article to help members become more involved in wetland issues.

Paul Coreil, the Wetlands Specialist with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, briefly reviewed the many wetlands education activities targeted to Louisiana wetlands (e.g., teacher's guides and workshops, field days, publications on wetland values and conservation, and youth camps). He has just completed a series of 20 district educational outreach meetings on wetlands functions and values throughout Louisiana. Coreil finds that local meetings with farmers and other landowners are one of the most effective ways to influence wetlands conservation.

The group agreed that community education is critical to achieving local involvement and trust, and thus citizens must be involved in the policy development process.

Ideas for involving citizens (both adults and students):

- Citizen involvement through water quality monitoring promotes better public appreciation of environmental policy. The example cited was the *Texas Watch* program.
- Several excellent teaching tools are available, including *Project Wet*, *WOW* (the Wonders of Wetlands), and *EnviroScape's* wetlands model.
- Encourage states to require environmental studies in school curricula; thus, reaching adults through their children.
- Encourage in-the-field study of wetlands as part of school curricula. Outdoor learning centers should be developed at all schools.
- Environmental education workshops for teachers offer an effective way to expand environmental education.
- All educational materials -- whether print or audiovisual -- must be easy to visualize, understand, and relate to wetlands with which the target audience is familiar.

- Internet must be increasingly used to exchange ideas and educate. The CD-ROM technology is among the interactive teaching tools with great potential.
- All education -- both adult and youth -- must involve mass media such as television and radio.

The basic premise on which all education -- including environmental education -- must be based is teaching how to think, not what to think.

Federal-State Partnerships for Wetlands

(John Meagher, facilitator)

Many federal-state partnerships have been formed in an effort to protect wetlands from impacts that are not comprehensively addressed by any single level of government. These partnerships, including both regulatory and non-regulatory programs, have been successful in improving wetlands protection. However, there are still many changes that can be implemented to improve program effectiveness. Some examples of the types of programs that have used partnerships include: permits, mitigation banks, acquisition, easements, education, restoration, preservation, tax incentives/disincentives, and grants.

Examples of partnerships that are working well were described for the group by Naomi Edelson, Wildlife Diversity Director, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Thomas D. Fontaine, Director, Everglades Systems Research Division, South Florida Water Management District; and Naki Stevens, Executive Director, Restore America's Estuaries.

The group established that the strongest partnerships have good communication between federal, state, and tribal and local levels of government. Lack of communication can lead to overlap of efforts and to misunderstanding of goals. The missions of the each governmental unit must be clearly understood by all parties to create a partnership with a common goal.

Partnerships usually necessitate compromise on all sides and require that all partners benefit. When the roles of different levels of government involved in wetlands protection change, the new players need to be informed of prior actions and goals to avoid repeating steps that were previously taken. The goals of the partnerships must also be clearly communicated to the public to avoid the misconception that one level of government is more protective of wetlands or of private property rights than another level of government. Goals relating to working with landowners to conserve wetlands or to inform landowners and the public about wetland values are often most effective. State, tribal, and local governments need to educate federal partners on regional and local issues and attitudes, and federal players must educate state, tribal, and local governments on national issues. In addition, state, tribal, and local governments can learn from the successes of the others. Finally, the many federal agencies involved in wetlands protection and restoration should increase coordination among their programs (including simplification of the transfer of money between agencies) and streamline the process by which they communicate with the states. One possibility is to deliver these programs through "one voice" or through one agency. Such streamlining would also help to reduce the burden of paperwork associated with federal programs.

Increased flexibility is another necessary element of a successful partnership program that the group discussed. Federal funding in wetlands restoration and protection programs is often directed toward capitalization of projects and provides only minimally, if at all, for operation, maintenance, liability, etc. Since wetlands restoration can require high costs for operation and maintenance, inflexible federal programs may not provide the best environmental outcomes in some situations. Federal programs that require local cost contribution need to be more flexible about allowing this contribution in the form of services (in-kind).

Federal-state programs have been effective in protecting our nation's wetlands and, as a result, more partnerships continue to form. The changes discussed here, if implemented, could increase the efficiency of these partnerships. All levels of government must work together to determine how to best protect wetland resources and the most appropriate roles and programs are for each type of government.

International Linkages

(Gonzalo Castro, facilitator)

Migratory species dependent on wetlands often require quality protected habitat in several countries. Those interested in the survival of migratory species must work together to protect and restore wetlands and other key habitats in several countries if they are to be successful. To illustrate and stress the importance of these linkages and what is being done in this field, several presentations were given to the group.

Tsuji Atsuo, of Save Fujimae Association, and Margaret Suzuki, International Liaison for Japan Wetlands Action Network discussed their outstanding efforts to protect Japanese wetlands important to many species of migratory birds. The *East Asia Australasian Shorebird Network* is a new initiative attracting support and generating interest and environmental awareness in several countries. The Network hopes to improve coordination and information exchange among wetland workers in a part of the world where important wetland systems are under increasing pressure. A representative of the American Cetacean Society stressed how wetlands are necessary to support portions of the food web that are critical to healthy whale populations throughout the world. It was explained how the *North American Waterfowl Management Plan* is striving to meet established goals for the management and conservation of key wetland areas in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Their work is helping to improve populations of many species of waterfowl and other migratory birds.

All linkages are based on biological relationships that generally include ecological similarities between areas and shared migratory and nonmigratory species. However, it is the human linkages that are required to understand what is possible and to take action to conserve wetlands on a global basis. Local interactions, concerns, and action to benefit a particular species or group of species lead to international linkages and formation of global networks to facilitate local action to restore and conserve linked habitats.

Forging Innovative Approaches

(John Meagher, facilitator)

There are a wide variety of innovative approaches being used around the country to encourage, promote, and implement wetlands restoration and conservation. Many of these approaches involve education to change the way people view wetlands. A short presentation was provided by Christy Williams of the Izaak Walton League of America on an effective, innovative approach, the *Save Our Streams* program (SOS). SOS provides information and education on wetlands restoration, monitoring, volunteer training, and project funding. Some of the methods used include workshops and demonstrations for environmental educators and students, environmental learning days, hands-on projects, and publications. They are currently producing a handbook on wetlands that will provide information on wetland functions and values, protection techniques, laws and regulations, agency activities, definitions, lists of field guides by region, and wetland monitoring programs.

Elana Cohen explained that the League of Women Voters *Education Fund* has initiated a *Wetlands Citizen Education Program* to increase citizen awareness about the need to protect our nation's wetlands. In early May, League activists from 25 states participated in a three day "train-the-trainers" workshop. In their home states they will serve as resource people and facilitators of discussions on wetlands issues. In addition to advocating prudent wetlands protection, they will encourage wetlands restoration activities. The League had a major article on wetlands in their June magazine.

Other innovative approaches to wetland restoration and conservation were discussed. Most of these involved sharing information between those with wetlands protection and restoration experience and those interested in learning how to protect wetlands in their part of the world. An increase in communication between scientists and conservation groups is critical to improving programs. Marcia Hanscom, Coastal Protection Committee, Sierra Club Los Angeles Chapter and Wetlands Action Network, described their "Biological Approach to Wetlands Protection Restoration." Programs firmly grounded in science will produce the best results in the long run. Possible approaches include increasing awareness of national databases of conservation groups and scientists interested in conservation, Internet list servers related to wetlands, and professional societies (e.g., Society of Aquatic Ecologists, Society of Wetland Scientists). Linking projects and "twinning" communities across the nation and internationally may also be a useful method for protecting wetlands and sharing information. It was suggested that the Ramsar Convention and the Ramsar Bureau could help form international links for exchanges between countries.

The group also spent time discussing approaches to wetlands conservation and restoration that work well. The

Internet is an excellent tool for getting information to people, but communication works best if it begins on a personal level (e.g., citizen ambassadors). Incentives, such as regulatory incentives (e.g., decreasing pollutant loads), tax incentives, or soil improvements have been effective in fostering support for programs such as *Barley for Birds*. The desire to portray an “environmentally friendly” image has been a positive incentive for corporations and may be useful as an incentive for other groups or governments. Incentives may be different in different cultures. The bioregional approach to education, focusing on the regional landscape, history, and heritage has been used successfully by the *Wetlands Action Network*. Enlisting key landowners, who are influential in their area, has been very useful in improving education regionally. Finally, effective marketing is critical in changing views toward wetlands protection.

Wetlands Restoration

(Jeanne Melanson, facilitator)

Virtually all wetlands in the United States are “managed.” They are impacted by human activities — whether they are wetlands slated for filling to provide for another land use or remote wetlands located in a national park. Sedimentation, drainage, filling, fire suppression, acid rain, ozone depletion, and global warming are all examples of how people are impacting wetlands. Thus, even the decision not to manage them is a form of management. There are numerous opportunities to use wetlands restoration as a positive management tool. The steps outlined below were developed and discussed by the group to help in establishing a successful product.

1. Agree On Definitions. To begin our discussion we agreed to use the following definitions taken from the NRCS Engineering Field Handbook, Chapter 13: *Wetland Restoration, Enhancement, or Creation*. When undertaking wetland restoration activities it is important to make sure all parties have a similar product in mind. The definitions below have broad acceptance among wetland professionals.

Wetland restoration is the rehabilitation of a degraded wetland or a hydric soil area that was previously wetland.

Wetland enhancement is improvement, maintenance, and management of existing wetlands for a particular function or value, possibly at the expense of others.

Wetland creation is the conversion of a non-wetland area into a wetland where a wetland never existed.

Constructed wetlands are specifically designed to treat both point and nonpoint sources of water pollution.

2. Know What You Want. Successful wetland restoration requires a clear vision and set of goals. The purpose of the wetland restoration should be clear. Is it to return it to a previous condition? Is it to gain or regain specific functions? Goals should be clearly set and understood by everyone. They may need to be revised on the way, but wetlands and landscapes are diverse and complex and cannot fill every need. Be specific!

3. Establish a Historic Baseline. If you don’t know where you started from, you won’t know if you have achieved anything. Data needs to be gathered to describe and quantify the conditions of the wetland restoration sites and surrounding landscapes before activities get underway. Otherwise, it may be unclear in the future if significant benefits have or have not been achieved. Skipping this important step may later undercut the success of a good project because you will need quantifiable information to document benefits.

4. Identify Overall Status of Landscape. Wetlands are part of the landscape. They are affected by what is going on particularly in their watershed. Landscape conditions will affect the success of the project. For example, in an urbanizing landscape the proliferation of impervious surfaces creates much higher energy storm flood events. These can dramatically impact plant and animal species’ ability to survive. It is probably not possible in this instance to “restore” a wetland to something we might define as resembling a pristine or undisturbed condition. In other areas a different set of goals might be achievable. The point is that it is not possible to separate a wetland from its surroundings.

5. Develop System-wide Restoration (boundary may not be a wetland). Knowing your goal is important. To achieve certain benefits, restoration of a wetland alone may not achieve the restoration of the desired function. For example, wetland protection and restoration in the prairie potholes has been an important goal of many people concerned with reestablishing and maintaining waterfowl populations. However, while protection and restoration of wetlands was important, the restoration of nesting cover was also essential. Predators could easily find and kill ducks (both adults and broods) because only minimal natural cover was saved, in areas immediately adjoining the wetlands. Greatly increased cover and vegetated wetlands were needed for successful waterfowl reproduction. One without the other would not achieve the desired result and could even worsen conditions

for nesting pairs.

6. Peer and Public Review. Allow your ideas and plans to be scrutinized and evaluated by peers and the public. This is important to improve on the good work already done. Evaluation can also assist in achieving broader acceptance. Be open to new ideas. There are many knowledgeable people who can contribute valuable insights and increase the success of the project. They may also identify problems that have been overlooked and suggest solutions.

7. Accept Uncertainty. Wetland restoration is not an exact science. Gathering data is important. It needs to be done comprehensively, but it is unlikely that it will be possible to collect enough data to eliminate uncertainty. At some point best professional judgment must be employed to move ahead with implementation. Inclusive peer and public review combined with adaptive management should minimize risks and provide for mid-course corrections.

8. Employ Adaptive Management. Unforeseen circumstances will occur, and it will be important to adapt to them. While not every new circumstance will warrant a change, some will. Important new data will emerge, improved solutions may appear, new problems may arise, and any of these or other occurrences may require a change in the plan. Expect this to happen and adapt. In our professional and personal lives we employ adaptive management on a daily basis. Plan for it as an opportunity to improve on the original project.

9. Avoid Quick Fixes, Think Holistically. Quick solutions are not always easier in the long term. It may be relatively simple to restore a wetland, but if the surrounding landscape is not taken into consideration, the restoration may be a failure. For example, increasing runoff rates could prevent a hardwood bottomland from being established and create an open marsh instead. A failure to achieve consensus before moving ahead with the project may lead to delays and complications at a later date. Look for synergistic opportunities both on the landscape and with cooperating parties. A holistic approach can lead to surprising win-win solutions!

10. Explore Compatible Uses. Nationally, wetlands comprise 5% of the land in the continental United States. Historically, they covered 10% of the landscape. Most current and historic wetlands are located on private land and many of those wetlands are located within agricultural and urbanizing landscapes. It is not realistic and it is not even desirable to take a preservationist approach to maintaining and restoring all wetlands. Therefore identifying and implementing compatible uses, those that maintain a functioning wetland and provide for economic returns to landowners, are desirable. In some areas hunting and fishing leases provide significant economic returns to landowners. Biomass production, timber production, grazing, water quality purification, flood storage and prevention, among others, are activities that can be conducted in ways that are compatible with protecting and restoring wetlands. Long-term public support for wetlands will require that they meet multiple needs including economic ones.

11. Monitor and Document Results. Monitor and document progress toward achieving the vision and goals established in the first step. Did the project achieve the established goals? Did it exceed them? Did it provide unanticipated benefits? Did it fall short of expected achievements? In order to maintain and expand support, increase understanding, and apply adaptive management to this and other wetland restoration projects, results must be monitored and documented.

Public-Private Partnerships

(Charles Rewa, facilitator)

The group focused on partnerships engaged in proactive, nonregulatory wetland stewardship activities. However, elements of successful partnerships related to nonregulatory programs may also apply to many aspects of wetland regulatory programs as well.

The group identified attributes of a successful public-private partnership as follows:

- The partnership offers benefits to all affected parties (provides a win-win outcome).
- The partnership fosters give-and-take among partners.

- The partners share common goals, or have different goals that complement one another.
- Resources available to each partner are leveraged or complemented by the resources of the other partner(s).
- Local partnerships are focused at the level of the local community.
- The partnership is built on trust and mutual understanding with each partner recognizing the expertise of the others.
- There is open and sustained communication among partners.
- Each partner is thoroughly committed and follows through on that commitment.
- Each partner recognizes the stewardship accomplishments of the partnership and of the other partner(s).
- Stewardship efforts of nonpartners are recognized by the partnership to encourage additional synergies.

The group also identified major action items needed to encourage public-private partnerships in wetlands stewardship including:

- Federal, state, and local tax policy should provide incentives for voluntary wetland stewardship efforts.
- There needs to be better and more predictable procedures for potential partners to locate one another. This may be done through demonstration projects, developing state and local directories, social events, telephone directory listings, and advertisements.
- Partners should do a better job of recognizing the stewardship accomplishments of both public and private partners, and recognize the contributions of nonpartners to draw them into additional wetlands stewardship activities.
- Federal, state, and local “safe harbor” provisions to protect future land use options of private landowners restoring wetlands need to be publicized or developed and made easy for landowners to understand and use.
- There continues to be a need to bridge the “us” vs. “them” mentality between the public government agencies and private sector groups and organizations.

Ramsar in the United States — Improving Policy and Implementation

(Constance Hunt, Chair)

Two breakout sessions were devoted to focusing on the organizing of the U.S. Ramsar Committee and its domestic agenda. The goal of the committee is to build public recognition of the importance of Ramsar and use it as an effective tool for the conservation of aquatic ecosystems and the restoration and protection of U.S. wetlands. Constance Hunt of the World Wildlife Fund was elected as the new Chair of the Committee. Larry Mason of the Conservation Treaty Support Fund and Caddo Lake Institute was elected Vice-Chair, and Vivian Newman of the Sierra Club was elected Secretary/Treasurer. Anyone interested in the activities of the U.S. Ramsar Committee or in becoming a member is encouraged to contact Constance Hunt at the World Wildlife Fund, 1250 Twenty-Fourth St., N.W. Washington, DC 20037-1175, or phone (202) 293-4800.

The Committee’s domestic agenda for the coming year will emphasize invigorating local groups to build on existing Ramsar designations, to encourage new worthy designations, to increase the focus on national designation of Ramsar sites, and to seek additional resources, protection, and tourism for the sites. Dwight Shellman of the Caddo Lake Institute will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to help establish local caretaker groups for Ramsar sites around the country. A procedure for the “certification” of local Ramsar groups will be drafted by the Caddo Lake Institute and the Ramsar Bureau for review by the committee. Alan Wentz of Ducks Unlimited will assist in efforts to establish local caretaker groups and will help in recruiting partners who have

worked on Ramsar sites for Committee membership.

Delmar Blasco, Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, pointed out that the key to Ramsar success in all countries is a national commitment to conserve the ecological values of designated sites. He emphasized the importance of nongovernmental organizations working with the Fish and Wildlife Service and State Department on the annual report to the Conference of Parties and reporting on what they have done and, especially, on the establishment of management plans. The Bureau will provide some Ramsar publications for use by the Committee.

George Furness, President of the Conservation Treaty Support Fund, discussed the importance of incentives for local groups as a key ingredient for advancing wetland protection. He will provide some brochures and videos that the committee can use to help build awareness of Ramsar and of the importance of wetlands as part of our global ecosystem. He also suggested that the committee approach agencies to set up a small grants program to help the activities of local Ramsar site support groups.

At the conclusion of the session, Dwight Shellman, Director of the Caddo Lake Institute, presented the committee with a check in the amount of \$1,000 to set up a small grants fund for local initiatives. Others wishing to support this fund should contact Vivian Newman.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Working Together for Wetlands was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the Terrene Institute, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, the National Wetlands Conservation Alliance, the World Wildlife Fund, the Sierra Club, the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Florida Center for Environmental Studies, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and IUCN/The World Conservation Union.

Financial support for *Working Together for Wetlands* was generously provided by Ducks Unlimited, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the Terrene Institute, the International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Department of State.

Planning, organization, and management of the conference was carried out by Bruce Beehler, Derek Cato, Mitchell Cohn, Barbara DeRosa, David Harwood, Constance Hunt, Peter Kaestner, Jane Marks, Donald MacLauchlan, Kimberly McClurg, Vivian Newman, Sara Nicholas, Steve Parcels, Kim Pendleton, Rafe Pomerance, Penny Price, Herbert Raffaele, Stacey Satagaj, Dwight Shellman, Carol Stricker, Scott Sutherland, Judith Taggart, and Gene Whitaker.

This publication was compiled and edited by Karissa Taylor, Gene Whitaker, Barbara DeRosa, and Bruce Beehler. Mark Stafford designed the cover. Joseph Floyd provided oversight of the printing of this report.

